

Charles' failure to work with parliament between 1629 and 1640 essay sample



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The eleven years of self-rule by Charles I that followed the dissolution of the 1628 - 1629 parliament was a perfectly legally and common practice for monarchs to do. Yet the changing politics of the nation led to immense disruption between Charles and his, so that when he was eventually forced to call parliament, it was very difficult to work together. In the years leading up to 1629, relations between king and parliament had worsened because of the loss of trust between the two.

Parliament felt that Charles was abusing the law, through his many loopholes around taxation such as ship money and tonnage and poundage, and Charles felt uneasy with parliament after the death of Buckingham. Although the actual murderer has no connections with Parliament, it was clear that had Charles not prorogued it, Parliament would have impeached Buckingham, so he would still be dead anyway. Also the MPs did little to hide their pleasure at Buckingham's death, which also upset Charles.

After Parliament dissolved in 1629, many people were left feeling discontent. And those who were had eleven years in which to fester and build on this, subtly influencing others to their like-mindedness. After the bishop's wars of 1639 - 40, Charles was forced to call parliament, to ask for more money to finance the armies (both English and Scottish). Previously Charles had just reverted to the ancient Forest Laws, which allowed him to claim rent from the people living on Royal Forest land, and Ship money, to fund his military.

However, by 1635 when Ship money was extended inland, most people had stopped paying. They felt that it was only an emergency taxation, to be used when the possibility of a sea attack was great. When it was first introduced,

the Spanish Armada was still fresh in people's minds, but as the years went on, they began to lose faith in it. The Forest laws also did not work as well as Charles hoped. Several people refused to pay it, as they had been living on the land all their life, and they were suddenly made to pay it now.

Although all of this was technically legal, this still annoyed the former MPs, who often met and discussed things, even if their discussions could not lead to any change in the laws immediately. Another thing that would make an alliance between king and people impossible was the revival of certain aspects of what many called Catholicism, although in some eyes it was merely an attempt to move away from the extremes of Puritanism into a more revered and 'beauty of holiness' state of Protestantism.

It was this issue that caused the Bishop's wars that eventually led to Charles having to surrender his self-rule to Parliament. His appointment of William Laud as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633 was another stick on the fire, as Laud was the main spokesperson for this Anglican belief, and to have someone with such controversial views in such a high place of power was worrying. The division of Charles and his parliament is displayed very simply in the Short Parliament.

It soon became clear that parliament, led by men such as Pym, was against the war and angered the King by debating all the grievances of the past years such as ship money. On May 5th Charles dissolved the parliament two days before a scheduled debate on the Scottish question, which would no doubt have resulted in a petition against the war. It lasted only three weeks. This shows the lack of harmony between the two sides. It is also possible

that during his reign of self-rule Charles had become accustomed to being in charge.

He was a very stubborn man, so for him to admit defeat after the second Bishop's war must have been extremely difficult. It was only due to Laud and the Earl of Stafford, two of his advisers, that Charles called Parliament in the first place. His quick decision to dissolve it so soon after proceedings began suggest that the debates were not going his way, and he responded in a childlike manner, the ' If we're not going to do it my way, we're not going to do it at all' attitude.

However due to the ongoing cost of upholding two armies, he was again forced to called Parliament, and this time he knew he was backed into a corner, and so did Parliament. Charles had insufficient funds, and was so at their mercy. They also had certain demands that only he could give. Any work done together from 1640 onwards was for each side's personal gain. There could be no alliance between them without trust. And any trust that might have existed between Charles and his Parliament had been lost over the eleven years of self-rul.